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# Introduction

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# Introduction to the Idaho Occupational Employment & Wage Survey

The Idaho Occupational Employment & Wage Survey presents occupational employment statistics collected under auspices of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The standardized methodology allows for cross-state comparison. The data used in this publication are collected over a three-year span.

This wage publication consists of wage tables for each of the wage regions shown below.

- **State of Idaho** – all 44 counties
- **Coeur d’Alene Metropolitan Statistical Area** – Kootenai County
- **Lewiston Metropolitan Statistical Area** – Nez Perce County and Asotin County, Washington
- **Boise City-Nampa Metropolitan Statistical Area** – Ada, Boise, Canyon, Gem and Owyhee counties
- **Pocatello Metropolitan Statistical Area** – Bannock and Power counties
- **Idaho Falls Metropolitan Statistical Area** – Bonneville and Jefferson counties
- **Northern Idaho Regional Area** – Bonner, Benewah, Boundary, Kootenai and Shoshone counties
- **North Central Idaho Regional Area** – Clearwater, Idaho, Latah, Lewis and Nez Perce counties
- **Southwestern Idaho Regional Area** – Ada, Adams, Boise, Canyon, Elmore, Gem, Owyhee, Payette, Valley & Washington counties
- **South Central Idaho Regional Area** – Blaine, Camas, Cassia, Gooding, Jerome, Lincoln, Minidoka and Twin Falls counties
- **Southeastern Idaho Regional Area** – Bannock, Bear Lake, Bingham, Caribou, Franklin, Oneida and Power counties
- **East Central Idaho Regional Area** – Bonneville, Butte, Clark, Custer, Fremont, Jefferson, Lemhi, Madison and Teton counties

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## Definitions

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### Occupational Classification System

These survey results are employment and wage estimates using the Office of Management and Budget’s Standard Occupational Classification system. This system was implemented in 2000, and data collected prior to 2000 are not directly comparable with previous years’ occupational employment and wage data.

### Occupations Included in this Survey (a listing of all occupations is provided in Appendix A)

The survey covers the following 22 major Standard Occupational Code groups:

<b>SOC</b>	<b>Major Occupation Group</b>
11	Management Occupations
13	Business & Financial Operations Occupations
15	Computer & Mathematical Occupations
17	Architecture & Engineering Occupations
19	Life, Physical & Social Science Occupations
21	Community & Social Service Occupations
23	Legal Occupations
25	Education, Training & Library Occupations
27	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports & Media Occupations
29	Healthcare Practitioner & Technical Occupations
31	Healthcare Support Occupations
33	Protective Service Occupations
35	Food Preparation & Serving Related Occupations
37	Building & Grounds, Cleaning & Maintenance Occupations
39	Personal Care & Service Occupations
41	Sales & Related Occupations
43	Office & Administrative Support Occupations
45	Farming, Fishing & Forestry Occupations
47	Construction & Extraction Occupations
49	Installation, Maintenance & Repair Occupations
51	Production Occupations
53	Transportation & Material Moving Occupations

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## Definitions

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### Average Wage

The average, or mean, data reflect a weighted mean. To derive the weighted mean, the hourly wage rate of each employee in a specific occupation is totaled and then divided by the number of employees. Unusually high or low wages can inflate or deflate the average wage.

### Employment

This is the estimate of total number of workers employed in a specific occupation. This is not the number of employees from companies responding to the wage survey.

### Entry Wage

This term refers to the average wage paid to those in the bottom third of workers in an occupation. This is an imputed wage measure rather than a surveyed measure.

### Metropolitan Statistical Area

A metropolitan statistical area is a county or collection of adjacent social and economic counties with a minimum population of 50,000 within a city or urbanized area. It is officially designated by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. Currently, there are five in Idaho: Boise City-Nampa MSA, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho Falls MSA, Lewiston MSA and Pocatello MSA.

### Middle Range (25<sup>th</sup> & 75<sup>th</sup> Percentiles)

All wages reported in an occupation for each worker are arrayed from lowest to highest: the middle 50 percent of the workers is the middle range. This means that one-fourth of the employees are earning wages below the low end of the middle range and one-fourth of the employees are earning wages above the high end. This range provides the user with information regarding the variance of pay within an occupation.

### Midpoint or Median Wage

All wages reported in an occupation for each worker are arrayed from lowest to highest: the wage of the absolute middle in the occupation is the median wage or midpoint. One-half of the workers in the occupation earned wages below the midpoint. The other half earned wages above the midpoint.

### Occupation

An occupation is a set of activities or tasks that employees are paid to perform. Employees who perform essentially the same tasks are included in the same occupation whether or not they are in the same industry. Some occupations are concentrated in a particular industry. Others may be found in a majority of industries.

### SOC Code

The numerical code identifies an occupation and its relation to other occupations in the survey. This is the fourth consecutive annual survey that has used the current classification system. Read more about the way occupations are grouped together in the next part of this introduction.

### Wage

Included as wages, or pay, for this survey are base rate, commissions, tips, deadheading pay, guaranteed pay, hazard pay, incentive pay, longevity pay, on-call pay, piece rate, portal-to-portal pay, production bonus and cost-of-living allowance.

Excluded from wages, or pay, for use in this survey are attendance bonus, back pay, draw, holiday premium pay, jury duty pay, lodging payment, meal payment, merchandise discount, nonproduction bonus, holiday bonus, overtime pay, perquisites, profit sharing payment, relocation allowance, tuition repayment, severance pay, shift differential, stock bonus, tool allowance, vacation pay, weekend pay and uniform allowance.

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## More About the Survey

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### Selecting the Sample

An industry employment-size stratification method was used to select the sample of firms. With this method, large firms represent themselves in the wage estimates while smaller firms represent both themselves and a number of other similar-size companies in the same industry. In cases where the employer had multiple units, the employment at each worksite was used in the stratification.

## Data Collection Methodology

The survey form used to collect employment and wage data is a structured, uniform collection document provided by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. The same form is used in all states and territories to collect similar data, making the survey comparable between states.

For some large companies, data were collected via personal visit, but the bulk of the survey effort was conducted by mail. Mail and telephone follow-up contacts were made to nonresponding companies. Technical procedures are available on the Bureau of Labor Statistics Internet site at <http://stats.bls.gov/oes/>.

The collection document included supplemental definitions of job titles and job duties. Employers were encouraged to match not just the job title but also the duties of their workers with the job duties listed in the supplemental definitions.

Employers were asked to report the number of employees by occupational classification and by pay range. Only wage and salary-type compensation data are included in the survey results. Fringe benefit costs, overtime, production bonuses, incentive pay and other non-wage earnings are not included.

## Timeliness

Accurate and reliable wage surveys take time to conduct. The sample must be designed and selected, data must be collected, coding and editing must be completed, analysis must be conducted and results must be published. The data for the current panel of this survey was collected between November 2008 and May 2009. The U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics then processed the files in combination with data from the November 2006 through May 2008 surveys. These files were returned to states, which then processed the files through an estimates software system to reflect May 2008.

In general wages do not change quickly. However, occupations and industries that are growing faster than average are likely to experience rapidly changing wages. For some high-demand occupations, especially in the information technology and skilled health care fields, wages have grown at a faster rate than other occupations.

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## Understanding & Using Wage Information

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Wage information is essential to employers, employees and everyone else who participates in the labor market. Employers use the data to determine whether they are paying their workers a competitive wage, to build wage and salary administration structures, to recruit workers, to find locations where new business operations may be successful and to maintain internal equity among current workers in an occupation.

Job seekers, students and other individuals use wage data to make decisions about jobs or careers, to negotiate job offers or promotions, to make relocation decisions and to decide which educational programs to pursue. Researchers use wage data to analyze trends, and managers use it to design and implement policies.

### Matching your job with the survey

There is no single right wage rate for an occupation. The economy and the supply and demand of the job market determine the wage an employer is willing and able to pay. The individual employee decides whether to accept the wage offered for the job.

Companies differ considerably in the products or services produced, working conditions, size, location and complexity of work required for different jobs. There are also significant differences between the skills, education, experience and abilities of employees within each occupational classification. Because of these differences, there is typically a wide range of wages actually paid for a single occupation. The right wage for a job is the one that matches the individual employee's compensation with the work to be performed and the industry, not merely the average surveyed wage.

Therefore, whether you are an employer, an employee or a job seeker, the best way to match a job with a wage is to match the skills and responsibilities of the job with the skills and responsibilities defined for the surveyed occupation.

All employers do not use the same set of definitions and titles for jobs so it is important to use the definition of duties rather than just the titles to match and compare wage rates. Job definitions are included

in the Glossary of Standard Occupational Classification Job Titles and Definitions. The glossary is also available on the Internet at <http://www.lmi.idaho.gov/Portals/13/PDFS/SOC%20Glossary.pdf>.

If an occupation is not listed in the survey tables, it may not have been included in the survey because many job titles are employer specific. The occupation also may not appear when the level of employment was too low to derive a reliable wage estimate or when publication of wages rates may have disclosed information for an individual firm.

If the exact title cannot be found, the next step is to benchmark your job with one that is included in the survey. To do this, use wage data for an occupation with a job definition that has similar skills, knowledge and responsibilities or look for the occupation within the next larger geographical area.

### **Using Middle Range Wage Information**

It is possible to make some assumptions about the middle range wage data to assist you in determining whether a wage for an occupation is competitive in the labor market. For example, less experienced workers may be receiving pay closer to the low end and more experienced workers may be receiving pay near the high end. The pay for some occupations is very sensitive to area, size of company, type of company or duties the workers are actually performing. These variables may cause the middle range wages of an occupation to be very broad.

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## **As You Use This Data**

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Keep the following important points about this wage survey in mind:

- The Idaho Department of Labor has provided several extensions to the official Occupational Employment Statistics data series, which have been developed in cooperation with the Bureau of Labor Statistics. These additional products have not been validated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and are not, therefore, official Bureau of Labor Statistics data series. The Idaho Department of Labor feels however, that they provide additional information that is useful to the users of department data.

- Differences in the way employers perceive the job definition or job title sometime lead to differences in the information reported on the survey.
- Wages may vary by area within Idaho. Even in the same geographic area, wide ranges of pay rates for the same occupation are not uncommon. These differences stem, in part, from the degree of competition for workers.
- The higher the level of skill, education or training an occupation requires, the broader the labor market area for recruitment. For example, the labor market for engineers may not be confined to the boundaries of Idaho, but may be regional, national or even international depending on the special skills required. On the other hand, the labor market for low-skill occupations is typically localized because workers may not wish to commute long distances or relocate for low-wage jobs.
- Wage information in this publication is based upon actual wages paid. It measures only the amount paid to the workers of those companies included in the survey at the time it was conducted. This information is not absolute. It is the calculation of wages generated by a statistically valid survey.
- When comparing, evaluating and using wages it is important to consider both the average and median wage. When these two measures are similar, it can be assumed that the distribution is close to normal. Thus it is a valid indicator of the actual wage being paid in that occupation.
- Estimates for detailed occupations do not sum to the totals because the totals include occupations not shown separately and rounded data are used. Estimates do not include self-employed workers.

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## Thank You!

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We appreciate the many Idaho employers who participated in this survey, allowing us to provide this important information to our customers.

We also want to thank those people who use this publication. If you need further assistance or have a suggestion to improve this publication, please contact us.

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